**President Franklin D. Roosevelt Press Conference (December 17, 1940)**

In the present world situation of course there is absolutely no doubt in the mind of a very overwhelming number of Americans that the best immediate defense of the United States is the success of Great Britain in defending itself; and that, therefore, quite aside from our historic and current interest in the survival of democracy, in the world as a whole, it is equally important from a selfish point of view of American defense, that we should do everything to help the British Empire to defend itself.

I have read a great deal of nonsense in the last few days by people who can only think in what we may call traditional terms about finances. In my memory, and your memory, and in all history, no major war has ever been won or lost through lack of money.

It isn't merely a question of doing things the traditional way; there are lots of other ways of doing them. I go back to the idea that the one thing necessary for American national defense is additional productive facilities; and the more we increase those facilities--factories, shipbuilding ways, munition plants, et cetera, and so on -- the stronger American national defense is.

Orders from Great Britain are therefore a tremendous asset to American national defense; because they automatically create additional facilities. I am talking selfishly, from the American point of view--nothing else. Therefore, from the selfish point of view, that production must be encouraged by us. There are several ways of encouraging it.

One way is to repeal certain existing statutes, like the Neutrality Act and the old Johnson Act and a few other things like that; and then to lend the money to Great Britain to be spent over here -- either lend it through private banking circles, as was done in the earlier days of the previous war, or make it a loan from this Government to the British Government. Another way is as a gift; in other words, for us to pay for all these munitions, ships, plants, guns, et cetera, and make a gift of them to Great Britain.

It is possible for the United States to take over British orders, and, because they are essentially the same kind of munitions that we use ourselves, turn them into American orders. We have enough money to do it. And thereupon, as to such portion of them as the military events of the future determine to be right and proper for us to allow to go to the other side, either lease or sell the materials, subject to mortgage, to the people on the other side. That would be on the general theory that it may still prove true that the best defense of Great Britain is the best defense of the United States, and therefore that these materials would be more useful to the defense of the United States if they were used in Great Britain, than if they were kept in storage here.

Well, let me give you an illustration: Suppose my neighbor's home catches fire, and I have a length of garden hose four or five hundred feet away. If he can take my garden hose and connect it up with his hydrant, I may help him to put out his fire. Now, what do I do? I don't say to him before that operation, "Neighbor, my garden hose cost me $15; you have to pay me $15 for it." What is the transaction that goes on? I don't want $15--I want my garden hose back after the fire is over. All right. If it goes through the fire all right, intact, without any damage to it, he gives it back to me and thanks me very much for the use of it. But suppose it gets smashed up--holes in it--during the fire; we don't have to have too much formality about it, but I say to him, "I was glad to lend you that hose; I see I can't use it any more, it's all smashed up." He says, "How many feet of it were there?" I tell him, "There were 150 feet of it." He says, "All right, I will replace it." Now, if I get a nice garden hose back, I am in pretty good shape.

In other words, if you lend certain munitions and get the munitions back at the end of the war, if they are intact haven't been hurt--you are all right; if they have been damaged or have deteriorated or have been lost completely, it seems to me you come out pretty well if you have them replaced by the fellow to whom you have lent them.

1. The Neutrality Acts limited the ability of U.S. businesses to sell war materials to countries at war with other countries. FDR obviously wants the U.S. to help Great Britain, so how does he argue that helping them helps us?
2. Why wasn’t Germany also seeking to buy war materials from the United States?
3. According to FDR, what are the three choices available in order for the United States to continue supplying Great Britain with war materials? Which one does FDR support?
4. Why did FDR explain the Lend-Lease act in the manner he did? Explain his reasoning behind using the example.
5. What type of tone would you describe FDR displayed in this news conference? What is he seeking to get out of the “performance” (his ultimate goal)?
6. What would FDR say to someone like Charles Lindbergh, who believed that arming Great Britain was the equivalent to the United States choosing a side in the conflict…and the first step toward the United States declaring war against Germany?